

REMARKS

In response to the Official Action mailed March 28, 2003, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider the rejection of the claims.

Claims 1, 10, 17, and 25 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by *Tofte*, U.S. Patent 4,747,142 (hereinafter "the *Tofte* reference"). Additionally, Claims 3-7, 16, 21-22 and 28-30 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable as being obvious in view of *Tofte*. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Independent claims 1, 10, 17, and 25, are each directed to the inventive feature that left, right and common mode output signals are generated as a function of a combination of left and right channel input signals such that clipping effects in the output are reduced. This feature is neither taught nor suggested in the *Tofte* reference.

As an initial matter, Applicants respectfully note that the three signals output from the *Tofte* system, namely the true left, true center, and true right out signals, shown in the single, unnumbered figure of *Tofte*, are not quasi-differential in nature. Specifically, *Tofte* does not disclose or suggest a common mode output voltage, which is a feature of the present claimed circuits and systems.

A common mode voltage in accordance with the present application is that voltage against which the left and right channel audio signals are referenced in a quasi-differential fashion. For example, as shown in FIGURE 4 of the present application, for the case of a three wire headset 108, the right and left audio channel voltages 112 and 113 are applied across the left and right output loads 406 and 408 referenced against the common mode voltage on common mode line 114. In such a system, the common mode voltage is not in itself an independent audio information carrier.

In contrast, in the system disclosed in the *Tofte* reference, three true independent information channels, designated the true left out, true center out, and true right out signals are generated for driving three independent speakers or the like. The true left and true right output signals are not referenced to the true center signal in a quasi-differential fashion. In essence, the *Tofte* system is a three track audio system approximating of present-day surround sound systems.

While the *Tofte* system takes various combinations of the left and right input signals to generate the true left, true center and true out output signals, the *Tofte* reference nowhere teaches or suggests that any of these signal combinations prevents clipping in any or all of the output signals. Specifically, *Tofte* does not even mention the problem of output voltage clipping and consequently does not suggest any possible solution to potential output clipping problems. Again, the goal of the invention described in the *Tofte* reference is to generate three tracks of audio data from a conventional two-track audio data source.

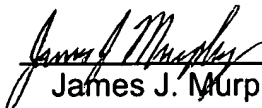
For the foregoing reasons, Independent Claims 1, 10, and 25 are therefore allowable in view of the teachings of the *Tofte* reference. Similarly, dependent Claims 3-7, 16, 21-22 and 28-30, which claim all the features of independent Claims 1, 10, 17, and 25, are also allowable on the same grounds.

Applicants respectfully submit that the Claims as they now stand are patentably distinct over the art cited.

With the addition of no new claims, no additional filing fees are due. However, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account Number 23-2426 of WINSTEAD SECHREST & MINICK P.C.

If the Examiner has any questions or comments concerning this paper or the present application in general, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned at (214) 745-5374.

Respectfully submitted,
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